



Child Protection Policy

Introduction

The Staff, Parents and Board of Management of **St. John the Apostle, Knocknacarra NS** have developed and agreed this policy in line with the current recommendations and guidelines relating to child abuse prevention and child protection guidelines.

This policy addresses the responsibilities of the school in the following areas:-

- a) Prevention – curriculum provision
- b) Procedures – procedures for dealing with concerns / disclosures
- c) Practice – best practice in child protection

An individual copy of this policy document and the appended section from the Department of Education and Skills Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures will be made available to all staff. It is incumbent on **all** staff to both familiarise themselves with and comply with ‘Children First’ and the DES child protection guidelines and procedures.

Rationale

This policy was drawn up in order to ensure that all recommended Child Protection Strategies and procedures are in place in this school and that all staff have an awareness of their roles and responsibilities in relation to Child Protection.

Aims

This policy aims to

- Create a safe, trusting, responsive and caring environment for children
- Provide personal safety skills education which specifically addresses abuse prevention for children
- Develop awareness and responsibility in the area of child protection among staff
- Put in place procedures for good practice to protect all children
- Ensure that staff members are aware of and familiar with the ‘Children First’ and the DES (Department of Education and Skills) guidelines and procedures in relation to reporting concerns and/or disclosures of child abuse.
- Provide for ongoing training in this and related areas for all school staff

Guidelines

Prevention

The Stay Safe programme is the primary resource used to provide education for children on abuse prevention. The programme is taught as part of the schools’ SPHE curriculum under the strand unit Safety and Protection (Personal Safety).

On enrolment of their child, parents will be informed that the Stay Safe programme is in use in the school and a copy of the Stay Safe ‘A Parent’s Guide’ provided.

The formal lessons of the programme will be taught in their entirety every second year in accordance with the SPHE two-year cycle plan.

Staff will make every effort to ensure that the messages of the programme are reinforced whenever possible.

Learning Support /Resource Teachers, Language Teachers and Special Needs Assistants will play a support role to the Class Teacher in relation to the planning, teaching and supporting of a programme of prevention for the children in their care.

Information regarding the Stay Safe Programme will be provided to parents, as part of the Introductory Information Evening for new parents, at the annual Introductory Curriculum meeting in September and through occasional letters regarding specific aspects of the programme.

We will endeavour in a situation where parents opt to withdraw their children from the Stay Safe Programme that a support teacher will schedule individual or group activities outside of the main classroom. However, it must be noted that this arrangement may not always be possible. If parents wish to withdraw their children, they will need to opt out of the programme with a signed letter stating their personal arrangements for ensuring that their children get the necessary information.

Procedures:

A Welcome Pack will be available to all new staff in the school (teachers, special needs assistants, ancillary staff secretarial, caretaking etc.). This pack will include a copy of our Child Protection Policy, and a glance card to target how to deal with disclosed information. All staff will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in 'Children First' and the Department of Education and Skills, 'Child Protection, Guidelines and Procedures' (pages 5 to 20 from the above DES guidelines)

Roles and Responsibilities:

The BoM (Board of Management) has primary responsibility for the care and welfare of pupils. The **DLP** (Designated Liaison Person) **Noreen Healy** has specific responsibility for Child Protection.

All staff have a general duty of care to ensure that arrangements are in place to protect children. Specifically, the BoM will:

- have a clear procedure for dealing with allegations or suspicions of child abuse (see below)
- monitor the progress of children at risk
- ensure that curricular provision is in place for the prevention of child abuse

It is the role of the DLP to:

- liaise with outside agencies
- be available to staff for consultation regarding suspicions or disclosures of abuse,
- keep own records relating to any disclosures made by staff
- maintain proper records in a secure confidential manner in a secure location
- report suspicions and allegations to outside agencies based on advice
- keep up to date on current developments regarding child protection

Guidelines for the DLP in handling reported concerns and disclosure:

- A standard reporting form is completed by the DLP/Deputy (Fiona Keane) as comprehensively as possible Appendix 3: Standard Report Form for reporting child protection and/ or welfare to the HSE. (Children First: National Guidance for the protection and Welfare of Children, 2011)
- The report will then be forwarded to the HSE by the DLP/Deputy in writing, if advised. In the event of an emergency or non-availability of HSE staff, the reports should be made to

the Gardaí. The DLP should also report the matter to the Chairperson of the BOM who should then follow the procedures as outlined in Part II (Section 4.8) of Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2011.

- Parents/guardians will normally be informed that a report is being made. If informing the parent/carer is likely to endanger the child or place the child at further risk, then the DLP may refrain from informing parents/guardians. However the decision not to inform the parent/carer should be briefly recorded together with the reasons for not doing so.
- When the allegation is against the DLP, the chairperson then assumes responsibility for reporting the matter to the HSE and filling in the standard reporting form.
- Where there are allegations or suspicions of Peer Abuse the DLP will follow the same procedures.
 - Parents will be notified and the DLP will inform the Chairperson.
 - Principal and class teachers will make arrangements to meet separately with all parents, to resolve the matter.
 - The school will make arrangements to minimise the possibility of the abusive behaviour recurring.

Practice:

The school staff will be given an opportunity at the first Staff Meeting annually to identify and agree practices to be adopted in the school. A written protocol outlining agreed practices are included as follows in this policy document:

The Staff and Board of Management have identified the following as areas of specific concern in relation to child protection. Following discussion and consultation the Staff and Board of Management have agreed to the following practices:

- a) Physical contact – All staff are reminded to be cautious regarding physical contact with children. However young children are often reassured by holding their hand. All staff are reminded that it is not acceptable to have a child sit on their lap.
- b) Visitors / Guest Speakers: All visitors and guest speakers are given an overview of our Child Protection Policy should they be in direct contact with individual or small groups of children. All volunteers working with children or doing teaching practice or classroom observation are required to familiarise themselves with the school's Child Protection Policy and provide details for the shortened vetting form provided by the CPSMA. Visiting coaches working with school children during and after the school day will not be left alone with children and advised of their duty of care.
- c) Children with specific toileting/intimate care needs: Parental consent will be requested to assist such children where necessary. Where a teacher or SNA accompany a child to the toilet, they are required to have another adult stand at the door. An agreement will be made with parents/guardian's of such children, regarding this arrangement. This agreement will be noted and signed by parents and they will be kept securely with confidential school records.
- d) Toileting accidents: All junior infant children are required to bring a bag with a change of clothes at the beginning of the school year. Children who have a toileting accident may change into these clothes. If an occasion should arise where a staff member needs to help to clean or dress a child an additional member of staff must also be present. In this situation the child's parent will be contacted and given the option to collect the child. With older children, spare clothing will be given, the parent alerted and children will be allowed to dress themselves.

- e) One- to One teaching – Staff in a one-to-one situation with a child will ensure that they are visible from outside the corridor at all times. Parents of these children will be informed that their child is getting one-to-one teaching and they will sign their consent for same during IEP meetings. A time-table recording times when children are scheduled for one-to-one teaching will be kept in the Principal’s office.
- f) Changing for Games/ PE/ Swimming –Every effort will be made to ensure that two adults will be available for supervision at all times. A school staff member will be present in the changing room at all times when children are in a Changing Room. When at the swimming pool, children will be escorted to the Dressing Room door by a member of school staff to ensure their safety.
- g) Recruitment and selection of staff – Staff are asked at interview to present evidence of the Garda Vetting form and all applicants are asked directly if they have ever been investigated for any incidences involving child abuse.
- h) General conduct – A culture of awareness among all staff of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour when dealing with children in our school.
- i) Internet use – Acceptable Use Policy – Children’s family name and details will not be used on displays. Parental consent will be sought to name individual children otherwise we refer to class e.g. “Junior Infants”.
- j) Administration of Medicine /First Aid- When attending to First Aid matters a staff member is always visible to others when with a child – Refer to Administration of Medicine’s policy.
- k) Media – Parental consent is sought at enrolment to allow children be photographed by the media during school events. Individual children will only be identified by first name and class. In a situation where an individual achievement is being reported parental consent will be sought. Parents and staff are reminded that any photos or video footage of school events will not be uploaded on any website or published on the web in any other format, such as *YouTube*. Such footage/media may only be recorded on the School’s own website.
- l) Attendance: School attendance is monitored on a daily basis by the class teacher and by the principal. Reports are made on a regular basis through the Tusla Officer and children with regular non-attendance and/or those who have more than 20 days absence are reported according to national guidelines. Contact made with parents when children have missed 17 days or more in the school year, when there isn’t a genuine reason for absence. Non-attendance is monitored along with signs of neglect, physical and emotional abuse by all staff members.
- m) Bullying: Bullying behaviour is addressed under our Anti-bullying Policy. If the behaviour is of a sexual nature, the matter will be referred to the DLP. It is recognised that bullying may be pupil/pupil, staff/pupil, parent/staff, staff /parent, parent/pupil.
- n) Induction of Teachers and Ancillary Staff: New and temporary staff in teaching and non-teaching positions will be required to provide evidence of Garda vetting. It is noted that all new staff must be vetted by the Teaching Council to be employed. All new staff will be informed about the Child Protection Policy.

- o) School trips/outings: All reasonable care will be taken to ensure the safety of children. Staff will have access to mobile phone to make contact with school, children will be accompanied when they have to leave the main group for any reason (toileting etc.), safety belts will be worn on bus journeys, staff members vigilant on road crossings. Refer to School Trips Policy. Members of the school staff will not carry children alone in their cars unless in case of an emergency situation..
- p) Supervision: Children will be supervised at all times. Refer to the school's policy on Supervision. Staff members will ensure that there is comprehensive supervision of children. Teachers will be mindful of going to /returning to class promptly, to ensure child safety and supervision. Teachers will be vigilant regarding duty rotas and supervision and allowing children out of class without permission Children must only be collected from their classrooms, not directly from the yard and cannot leave the school premises without permission. People visiting school must always report to the office and sign the visitors book before entering the premises.
- q) Visibility: teachers on yard duty will wear high-vis vests to be visible to children and will always ensure that children are within their sight. Children will not be allowed to remain in classrooms or toilets where they would not be under adult supervision. An older child wearing a red-bib will accompany younger children to the toilet area from the yard so they are not there alone.
- r) Use of phones: Children are not allowed to use personal phones during the school day. All phone calls home are made through the teacher or through the office. Phones are gathered by the class teacher and returned at the end of the day. This is to ensure that children are not sharing any unsuitable material.
- s) Internet safety: All unsafe sites are monitored by PDST and blocked on school computers and I-pads. Should a teacher wish to access a blocked site, permission must be sought from the principal to request the change. Children have no unsupervised access to the internet in school. Teachers are reminded to ensure that phones are collected to ensure that children have no access on personal devices. Children are not allowed use personal tablets or devices with internet connections in school.

Monitoring and Recording Procedures
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Lámh Cúnta Card: Each staff member is provided with this card for use in a situation where the staff member needs cover, and needs to give immediate attention to an issue. When a staff member receives this card it is a signal to immediately come to the aid of the staff member who sent it.

Child Protection Pack: Each staff member will be issued with a Child Protection Pack. This pack will include: a copy of the Child Protection Policy, Summary Card, Sheet with suggestions for Monitoring from the Children First Guidelines, A copy of the appendix from the DES Guidelines, and a copy of the Information sheet 'Signs and symptoms of Child Abuse' from the Children First Guidelines, with copies of the monitoring sheets.

Storage of Records:

Teaching staff will store Child Protection records securely and separately from other educational records in a locked filing cabinet. At the end of the year monitoring records will be stored securely in confidential files in the principal's office.

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) and Ancillary Staff will report incidences to the DLP who will make the written record and store this record securely in the principal's office.

The DLP will keep a **Child Protection Record Book** to record all reports forwarded from staff. This Record Book will be stored securely in confidential files in the Principal's office.

While every effort will be made to adhere to best practice as agreed and outlined above, in the event of an emergency where this is not possible or practicable a full record of the incident should be made and reported to the principal and parents.

Reporting or making Referrals

In a situation where a referral must be made the DLP will seek advice from the HSE in line with the recommendations in the DES Guidelines listed above.

Reference to other policies and/or plans:

Prevention: SPHE curriculum, Strand Unit on 'Safety and Protection',
The School Code of Behaviour

Procedures: Code of Behaviour
Health and Safety Statement

Practice: School Tours / Outings
Supervision
IT – Acceptable use policy
Administration of Medicines

Appendices: DES Guidelines, Copy of Child Protection Pack

Timetable for Review

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Board of Management on an annual basis or when the need arises.

Staff will be requested on a regular basis to review the school policy in this area and every effort will be made to ensure that the attention of all new staff is drawn to the school Child Protection Policy.

The Board of Management will ensure that adequate training and support is provided for all staff.

Ratification & Communication

A summary sheet of this policy will be displayed in the school foyer. The full text of this policy will be available to download from the school's website www.knocknacarrans.ie

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management of St. John the Apostle, Knocknacarra NS, on January 19th 2016 subsequently communicated to the school community via the school's website.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Mr. Frank Laffey, Chairperson, Board of Management